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Greetings from the Missouri Office of Homeland Security:

This letter contains information on a number of topics. Please review its contents carefully and share it as you deem appropriate.

Re-examine and Re-evaluate Relationships with Schools—

First, I want to use this letter to reach out to you—our Sheriffs, Police Chiefs, Fire Chiefs, Emergency Management Directors, Emergency Medical Services, and other Homeland Security colleagues who serve on our Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees (RHSOC), and stress the critical importance of re-examining and re-evaluating our relationships with schools in Missouri. I personally feel that we have safe schools. However, in light of recent attacks at schools across our Nation, including the one this week in Joplin, Missouri, I believe it is prudent to take a look, regionally, at our first responder partnerships with our schools—public and non-public—and insure that we have *relevant* and *current* response plans in place. Further, we need to make certain that our emergency procedures insure adequate and redundant communication capabilities with schools. As first responders, you need to know the expectations of schools for you in a crisis. Likewise, school officials need to know your response capabilities.

As a part of this re-examination and re-evaluation, I am asking that, collectively, all first responders get-together in each of their regions and form local “working groups” under the leadership and direction of the primary law enforcement representatives on your RHSOCs. Many of you are already meeting with all of the schools in your jurisdictions. But some are not. Many of you have reviewed and given input into school emergency plans for every school system and school building in your jurisdiction. Some have not. Many areas have school resource officers who are the logical link between schools and first responders. However, some public schools and most non-public schools do not have school resource officers.

I know that all of you are busy, and have other things to do. We are not putting an artificial deadline on you to engage all schools with the first responder community in your regions, but ask that you do it as soon as possible. Of all the things that we do, this needs to be a priority.

The Police Chief and Sheriff representatives in each RHSOC should co-chair this working group, and engage every public, private, and parochial school in their region in this working group. The Missouri School Board Association (MSBA) can assist in bringing educational institutions into this process. Deliberate attention should be given to making sure that each and every school in the region has an up-to-date emergency plan—and that the plans have incorporated input from

the Missouri Highway Patrol and other appropriate agencies, such as public and mental health, in addition to the first responders in each area.

Addition of Elementary and Secondary Education to the Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees

Through this letter, I am formally asking that you add elementary and secondary education as another category of full member representation on the RHSOC. We will be asking the Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) to concur with this move, but do not want to wait until our regularly scheduled December meeting to move in this direction. We will be working with each of your elected spokespersons, the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) who handle the administrative functions for your RHSOCs, and the SEMA Area Coordinators, as well as the MSBA, to engage elementary and secondary education in our homeland security programs. We view our children as our most critical and valuable asset in Missouri. Insuring a safe and secure learning environment in the state of Missouri is a top Homeland Security priority.

Resources on School Violence—

The Missouri Office of Homeland Security has available, in digital format, reference material and studies on school violence. In the coming days, these resources will be available through links at the Missouri Office of Homeland Security (MOHS) web site: <http://www.dps.mo.gov/HomelandSecurity/>. I also urge you to seek out other sources of information to identify best practices and lessons learned from past incidents of school violence.

Additionally, our office is exploring other initiatives to aid first responders on the topic of school violence. We are working with the Missouri School Boards' Association on a statewide web cast for first responders, school personnel, and others that will take place on October 19th. The web cast will feature a panel of experts discussing various aspects of school violence, including key considerations in tactical response from law enforcement in targeted school violence incidents. This web cast is free to anyone in Missouri who wishes to view it. In the next several days, information on this web cast can be obtained from the Missouri School Boards' Association web site at: <http://www.msbanet.org/>. I urge each of you to take the time and view this program. For those who cannot view the program when it is broadcast, copies will be available, through the MSBA.

Free Web-based Tool Available to Schools for Health Emergency Planning—

In terms of a planning resource, be aware that the Department of Health and Senior Services has partnered with MSBA to make available to schools—public and nonpublic—a web-based health safety/emergency planning tool. *There is no cost to schools for this tool.* Instructions for obtaining the tool can be found at the following web site: www.schoolsprepared.org.

Again, this tool is available to all public, private, and parochial schools in Missouri. The tool allows school plans to be instantly updated as threats to schools change. One feature of the tool is a tracking component. In other words, the tool can identify persons who have accessed the plan to review it or persons who have made changes to the plan. The tool helps verify that everyone in a school system is “on board” with the health emergency response plan. Also, the web-based tool permits the incorporation of photos, diagrams, and other relevant documents to the emergency plan—and provides school officials the option to make the plan available to first responders, before or during an actual crisis.

Homeland Security Safe Schools Working Group

For the last several months, there has been a Homeland Security Safe Schools Working Group that has been functioning at the state level. This group is co-chaired by Dr. Thomas Quinn of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and me. Membership in the group has been extended to education-related organizations in Missouri, representing parents, school board members, teachers, administrators, and others. The group is an established sub-committee of the Governor's Homeland Security Advisory Council, and has a strong interest in coordinating its efforts with the Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees. The group is currently reviewing the possibility of expansion of the web based school health safety planning tool to include all hazards planning for schools, and exploring several funding sources to pay for this expanded functionality. We are also looking at pandemic planning for schools, earthquake planning, and a number of other issues.

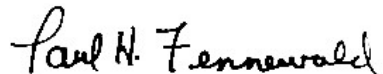
Other Homeland Security School Related Initiative

DPS is also working on bringing together law enforcement tactical team leaders from the federal, state and local level to discuss best practices for law enforcement, in school hostage situations. This meeting will take place in the next several weeks and we will keep you advised of this and other emerging initiatives relative to school safety.

In closing, let me say again that I sincerely believe that our schools are safe. At the same time, recent events suggest that in the exercise of due diligence with our responsibilities, we need to take pause and review our emergency planning—giving particular attention to our emergency procedures for our schools, public and non-public . . . whether urban, suburban, or rural, and make sure that we have all stakeholders engaged in this process. As in all things we do, let us approach this from a “common sense” perspective.

Thank you for your contribution to Missouri's homeland security.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul H. Fennewald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paul H. Fennewald